

Brain Based Aspects of AVP
Social Intelligence – the intelligence of relationships
Agenda

Opening Reading: Social Intelligence p 3-4

Gathering – My affirmation name is... and one word for what draws me to this topic is....

Introduction to Social Intelligence - Read around

Components of Social Style: Resilience, Outlook, Social Intuition, Social Awareness, Sensitivity to context, Attention

Brainstorm 1 – How does AVP enhance these skills? Right on the chart?

Light & Lively – You're Amazing

Brainstorm 2 – What activities do we know that enhance learning in these areas?

Reflection -

Closing – Energy hands Think about what spoke to you in this session and pass that along to your neighbor.

Readings:

Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships– Daniel Goleman

Destructive Emotions – How Can We Overcome Them: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama – Daniel Goleman

The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights (2011) – Daniel Goleman

The Emotional Life of Your Brain – Richard Davidson

Search Inside Yourself – the Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace) – Chade-Meng Tan This is the course taught to Google personnel

Building Emotional Intelligence – Techniques to cultivate Inner Strength in Children – Linda Lantieri

The Better Angles of Our Nature – Steven Pinker – Another look at our emotional heritage as developed through evolution.

Thoughts I couldn't fit elsewhere: Soc. Intel.Princeton sermon story p.50, Grand Central Station story 0.51 TP story p.82 Importance of reframing – p.75 As we alter our perceptions, we alter our emotions.

Training for social intelligence often makes people aware of their gut reactions, then learn to listen to them. "Learn to trust your inner sense,"

Narcissism - dreams of glory. It's healthy if it also included empathy. Unhealthy is Machiavellian – My ends justify my means, manipulation of others. How does AVP address manipulation? Assertiveness Exercise Others?

We can reset our emotional base. Positive events and intentionally thinking about them can change outlook and temperament. "Expect the best"

Learning to recover from distress is more valuable than preventing distress. This is resilience. Children like to hear 'just scary enough' stories over and over. They are learning how to deal with the feelings.

Videos:

Meditation in San Francisco high schools: <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/openforum/article/Meditation-transforms-roughest-San-Francisco-5136942.php>

Meditation in Prison: <http://www.davidlynchfoundation.org/prisons.html>

Social Intelligence – the Intelligence of Relationships

We interact with the world through two mental channels. 1 our logical, verbal mind centered in the frontal lobes. 2 our non-verbal social brain constantly scanning the environment, sizing up the situation, assessing and building emotional links.

The social brain: Whenever we connect with someone, social brains interlock. Repeatedly driving our brain into a given register molds certain neural circuitry and can refashion our brain positively or negatively. It's important to choose your company. Increasingly we are isolated from the immediate environment by music ear buds and cell phones. This is taking its toll.

Emotions are contagious and positive emotions are more contagious: It's hard to resist the positive nature of AVP. Simpatico or rapport entails mutual attention, shared positive feeling, well-coordinated nonverbal interaction indicated by mutual empathy, good feeling invoked through tone of voice and facial expression, coordination or synchrony through pace and timing of a conversation and our body movements.

We are hardwired for empathy. Mirror neurons sense both the move another person is about to make and their feelings, and instantaneously prepares us to imitate that movement and feel with them. The more we feel empathy the more we want to help – altruism.

We are also hardwired for assessing risk. Our amygdala is constantly scanning at lightning speed to decide if there is anything 'off' about a person or situation. Living in stressful, traumatic situations makes this the first assumption.

A newly discovered type of neuron, the spindle cell, guides social decisions. They are the fastest reactors and more plentiful in humans than any other species. We have about 1000 times as many as our closest ape relatives. They connect the part of our brain that coordinates our attention, thoughts, emotions and our body's response. They are very fast and rich in receptors for the chemicals which play key roles in bonding with others.

While all this instant judgment is going on, we also become aware and are able to bring our slower logical, skillful brain into action. We can make decisions based on prior experience, understanding of the other person, and consideration of the consequences of our actions. AVP helps us learn to slow down our reactions, evaluate the situation and apply skilled responses. Cyber bullying and road rage come from not having in-person interactions and feedback loops. Reframing a situation from upsetting to pleasurable has been shown to change the reaction in the brain. Shown a picture of a woman crying outside a church the subject assumes a funeral and feels sad. Asked to think again about the possibilities they think wedding and experience mood lift.

Six Dimensions of Emotional Style

Richard Davidson (The Emotional Life of Your Brain) has identified 6 dimensions of a person's emotional style. These all reflect activity in specific, identifiable brain circuits. Unlike previous personality typing, these 6 styles can be physically by fMRI.

1. Resilience – how we recover from setbacks

High resilience is associated with greater activity in the left prefrontal cortex which quiets the amygdala. Low resilience is associated with more activation in the right prefrontal cortex

Either extreme can trip you up. Extreme resilience may mean you don't take problems seriously. Being slow to recover prevents you from moving forward after a setback.

2. Outlook – the capacity to remain upbeat and to sustain positive emotion over time

Positive responses originate in the nucleus accumbens which is associated with release or capture of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Outlook is determined by the ability to sustain positive reactions. Activity in the left prefrontal cortex allows positive emotions to be sustained.

The positive extreme has ability to maintain optimism in spite of significant setbacks. The negative end is cynical and pessimistic has difficulty experiencing positive events and can't hold on to the positive glow. This is a companion to resilience.

3. Social Intuition – how attuned we are to nonverbal social cues.

High levels of social intuition are associated with higher levels of activation in the fusiform gyrus which specializes in reading emotions in faces and low levels of social intuition correlate with low activation of the fusiform gyrus and higher activation of the amygdala.

The positive end of this element is able to pick up subtle nonverbal cues, to read people's body language, vocal intonation and facial expressions. Extreme insensitivity to these signals is characteristic of people on the autism spectrum. Being sensitive to the emotional state of others is essential to both empathy and compassion.

4. Self Awareness – sensitivity to our own thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations

Social Awareness is influenced by activity in the insula which contains a map of our visceral organs and the somatosensory cortex which maps sensations from the surface of our body.

Self-aware people are acutely aware of their thought and feelings and attuned to the messages their body sends them. They understand their 'gut' reactions. The cost can be a draining sensitivity to others causing burnout.

People who are not Self-aware don't realize that they are even having feelings. They may be surprised when someone asks them why they are so angry, sad or upset. Likewise, they are not sensitive to the feelings of others or why someone might be having a feeling.

5. Sensitivity to Context – awareness and response to the rules and expectations of differing settings such as home, work, party, interview...

The ability to recognize social situations correlates with activity in the hippocampus which is known to process memories.

Sensitivity to the rules of social engagement and the capacity to regulate our emotions and behavior varies between people. Do they know where, when and to whom to tell an off color joke? Can they modify their approach to a boss, co-worker, friend and family?

6. Attention – our ability to screen out emotional distractions.

Our level of attention depends on the ability of our prefrontal cortex to strengthen the focus on important stimulate and to weaken the interference of nonessential stimulate.

Although thought of as a component of cognitive ability, the ability to pay attention in the social dimensions is crucial. Two aspects of attention are relevant. Selective attention allows us to focus on one person, thought or issue in spite of the enormous amount of information coming in through our senses all the time. Open, non-judgmental awareness is the ability to remain open to whatever might pass into your thoughts. This allows you to keep your focus and not be hijacked by emotions and events. This is an important factor in the dimensions of Social Intuition, Self Awareness and Sensitivity to Context.

4 Meditation Practices that have been shown to build positive emotions:

1. Body Scan Relaxation – Lying down or sitting, successively relax each part of your body

2. Focused Attention Meditation – focusing on one spot has been shown to build attention

3. Unfocused Meditation – Allowing thoughts to just pass by without

4. Compassionate Meditation – Sending and receiving compassion

Exercises for Each Competency – Emotional Life of Your Brain

Resilience:

- To cultivate greater resilience, practice the mindful breathing above. Also practice reframing adversity in such a way as to believe that it is not as extreme or enduring as it could be. This is best done initially with a therapist. Resources at: <http://www.beckinstitute.org/what-is-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>
- To cultivate slower resilience (may strengthen your capacity for empathy) focus on your discomfort or that of someone close to you. The Buddhist tradition of tonglen involves envisioning someone's suffering. Breathe in that suffering or envision the suffering leaving the person. Breathe out compassion for that person. Start with someone close to you move on to others including someone you have difficulty with and ultimately the whole world.

Outlook: Daily repeatedly

- Write down one positive characteristic of yourself and one positive characteristic of someone you regularly interact with.
- Express gratitude regularly. Pay attention to times you say 'thank you'. Look the person in the eyes and muster as much genuine gratitude as you can. Keep a journal; at the end of the day note the specific times you felt genuinely connected | gratitude
- 3 compliment others regularly. Keep an eye out for opportunities. Make eye contact and journal about these times.

Social Intuition:

- Pay attention. Observe the people around you, especially their faces. See if you can predict how they will interact. See if their tone of voice seems to match their body language and facial expressions.
- In a busy place, close your eyes and focus on the voices around you. Focus on the tone of voice not the content. Describe to yourself what that tone conveys – serenity, joy, anticipation, anxiety stress... Open your eyes and observe what comes next. Does your description seem accurate?
- In a busy place observe body language noting how they orient themselves to each other, how they sit or stand, what gestures they make.
- Designate one channel – tone of voice or body language – to focus on for a whole day.

Self-Awareness:

- Choose a time of day when you are most awake. Sit upright. Focus on your breathing and the sensations it creates throughout your body. Focus on the tip of your nose, noticing the different sensations that arise with each breath. When you notice you have been distracted, simply return your focus to your breathing.
- Body Scan – Sit upright. Move your attention systematically around your body. Notice the specific sensations at each. Don't think about those parts of your body, but experience the sensations. Refocus when needed.

Sensitivity to context: - little research on this but some ideas from treatment of PTSD

Learn to relax so you can stay calm in situations that make you anxious or angry.

- To help you relax, start with a simple breathing technique. Start with your eyes closed, attend to your breathing as you would in mindfulness meditation, counting the duration of each inhalation and exhalation.
- Once you have counted for several breaths, lengthen your breathing cycle so it takes you one more second. Keep increasing the length as long as you feel comfortable, and then maintain these longer breaths for five minutes.
- Notice if the inhalation and exhalation are the same length. If one is longer, try to lengthen the other so that they take equal amounts of time. Do this for five minutes and then open your eyes.

When you are comfortable, move to the context training

- Make a list of the specific cues and behaviors that upset you. Be as specific and vivid and detailed as possible.
- Then, in a safe context gently and gradually bring to mind images associated with the situation as vividly as possible.
- Simultaneously, perform the breathing exercise. Continue to do this until you feel comfortable and relaxed despite imagining the distressing situation. Do this for about 15 minutes.

Attention:

- For focused attention - Sit quietly with your eyes open. Find a small visible object. Focus all your attention upon this one object, Keep your eyes trained on it. Refocus when needed.
- For open awareness – Sit quietly. Maintain a clear awareness of and openness to your surroundings. Keep your mind calm and relaxed. Lightly attend to whatever object happens to rise to the top of your awareness but so not latch onto it. Give your full attention to the most salient current object but without thinking about it; aware and observing but not intellectually thinking about it. Generate a state of openness. When thoughts arise, simply let them pass through your mind without leaving any trace in it. Allow new thoughts to slip into consciousness.

Ideas and practices we can incorporate/maximize in AVP

Slow down – div student story. We are creating a safe space with low tension and arousal.

Mirror neurons – empathy development

4 Meditations have been shown to build positive connections in the brain

1. Body Scan - builds ability to relax

2. Focused Awareness – on breath, candle mantra... - Helps develop focus and attention

3. Open Awareness – just sit, let thoughts and sounds come and go. Wind on the Mountain meditation – Allows you to be open to the environment with creativity not closed in judgment...

4. Compassion - breathe compassion in and out. Start with self, then those closest to you. See them bathed in light and love, proceed to more difficult people, at least several breaths for each person.

Light & Livelies - Adult need for Play

Non-verbal social intelligence system

Power of a smile – Opening of Social Intelligence

Contagion of emotions – positive more contagious and passed along through several people.

Using bodies in synchronicity – father and son tossing ball, folk dance, pattern ball, dissolving tension – Theo's story

TP Stories: p3 soldiers in Iraq p 83 boy in the school yard p50 Good Samaritan

P51 Grand Central Station story about stopping

The Better Angles of our Nature – Steven Pinker

What activities do we know that enhance learning in these areas?

From Brainstorm AVP/USA 2014

Light and Livelies	Power 1, 2, 3, 4
Adjective names	Broken Squares
Affirmation	Who am I?
Build a Better Community	

How does AVP enhance these skills?

We model behavior	Listening
Empathy	Affirmation
Role Plays	Reflections
Hurricane	Light & Livelies
Meditation Exercise Adv	Who am I?
Creating a sacred space	Dignity
Dots masks	Appreciation of uniqueness
Ground rules	Safety
Concentric circles	Brainstorming
Self Awareness	Compassionate listening
Trees of...	Broken Squares – resiliency
Injunctions of childhood	Unanswered questions
Slowing down	Trust
Human to Human	Mandala
Forgiveness	Open sharing
We are all learners and teachers	Community building